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TECHNICAL ITEMS

BUOYS FOR SUPERTANKERS

As the majority of ports are not equipped at present to take supertankers, either new docks or jetties must be constructed or tankers have to be made fast to a certain number of buoys. But these solutions entail large-scale investments and present many technical problems. Now as long ago as 1961 a Swiss firm in Fribourg conceived a revolutionary mooring system employing only a single buoy and allowing vessels of 35,000 tons to be loaded and discharged. After computer studies and model tests the company has now developed a buoy capable of mooring tankers up to 1,000,000 tons dead-weight. Already such buoys have been delivered for ships up to 750,000 tons. The chief advantage of the system is that the moored vessel is able to move freely under the action of wind and currents during the entire loading or discharging operation. When a tanker arrives, lines are secured to the mooring hawsers and the floating pipes are then connected to the ship's manifold pipe. To discharge a vessel for example, the oil is led from the ship to the buoy through the floating pipe, and thence to the shore installations via flexible underwater pipes and the fixed pipeline on the sea bed. Having completed the operation, the tanker can put to sea again after disconnecting the pipe and mooring lines. The system combines high level technology with relatively low costs, and demands only a minimum of maintenance. This Swiss firm has installed mooring buoys for the major oil companies of all five continents, and holds more than three-quarters of the world market in this field.

BRUSSELS: AWARD FOR A SWISS INVENTION

The jury of the last Brussels Inventions Salon awarded a gold medal to a Geneva firm specialising in precision engineering, for its "Rotoring". This consists of a rotating commutator which utilises the nutational motion of a ring subjected to a revolving magnetic field. The device offers numerous advantages: it operates without friction and with minimal driving torque; high commutation speeds are attained with only low power input. It can thus be fitted in miniature dc. synchronous or stepping motors, since its rotor is mounted straight on the output shaft. Motor speed may exceed 10,000 rpm,

which means that the commutation pulses amount to milliseconds. On account of the negligible inertia of the ring moreover, the rotor inertia is minimal. Consequently the commutation can follow very sudden starting and stopping on the motor. Possible applications for this device are legion. In particular it may be employed in communications engineering for commutating weak current signals, in control techniques for synchronising remote-controlled operations or for distributing sequential signals, etc.

SWISS MACHINE PROVIDES A SENSATION IN PARIS

At the International Textile Machinery Exhibition—ITMA 71—held in Paris, Switzerland presented a whole range of new machines. One of them created a sensation: the WEVENIT-C 36, a fully automatic knitting machine with electronic selection, made by S. A. Ed. Dubied & Cie, of Neuchatel. It raised specialists' eyebrows with the boldness of its conception, the level of technical perfection incorporated and the quality and quantity of the work turned out on it. It represents an enormous step towards rationalised knitting and can follow rapid fashion changes with remarkable ease. But the most revolutionary aspect of this design is the ability to create patterns and transfer them on to the machine by means of a computer. WEVENIT-C 36 is equipped with a sort of TV screen, the "Telepat", on which a pattern may be created electronically for subsequent knitting by the mechanical systems. This constitutes a new industrial success for Switzerland. Already the country producing the biggest number of industrial machines in proportion to her population, at Paris she proved that she is also in the vanguard of progress.

NEW ADJUSTABLE GARDEN SHADE

A Swiss maker of garden shades at Frauenfeld (Thurgau) offers numerous models, including one of novel conception, the ALEXO. Its ball joint enables it to be set in any attitude, affording shade at any hour of the day. The stability of the square tubes supporting it prevents any unwanted swivelling motion due to wind. The rectangular shade is otherwise very easy to fix and remove. Adjustable in any position, it

can be used as a screen for drying laundry; for the latter duty a useful accessory provides more than 80ft. of line.

TWO SWISS FIRMS POOL THEIR RESOURCES FOR CONVEYING SYSTEMS

Von Roll S.A., of Gerlafingen (Solothurn) and Schindler Holding S.A., Hergiswil, have just launched a joint subsidiary company: Schindler-Von Roll Conveyor Ltd. The purpose of the new company will be to manufacture and sell the "Piste-3-D-Von Roll" conveying system. This is a very complicated system allowing not only vertical but also horizontal conveying inside buildings, especially hospitals. Presented by Von Roll, it consists of a sort of railway using self-propelled container trucks. These can be programmed, so that they find their own way to their destination. This should enable the distribution of hospital meals to be rationalised, saving a lot of personnel. The trucks can also be employed to move linen, and instruments and utensils of all kinds.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF ELECTRON TUBES

Although the transistor has replaced the traditional valve in virtually every household electronic apparatus, the vacuum tube still has its use in broadcast transmitters because of its higher power output. A lot of research is still going on in making smaller and more powerful classical vacuum tubes. Brown Boveri is a leader in this field. It has developed tetrodes with an output power of 500 kilowatt in which glass is replaced by ceramic. This enables the dimensions to be considerably reduced and leads to a robust structure, with lower inductance, smaller losses through connections and the advantage of elevated frequencies.

SWISS LOVE FOR SWEETIES

Starting as a craft trade, the production of chocolate is one of the oldest of Switzerland's foodstuffs industries. It now occupies 6,350 persons. In 1970 chocolate sales showed a clear rise (up to 4.1 per cent) for the first time since 1965. The 60,000 ton level was reached, representing a total value exceeding 600M Swiss francs. Consumption rose from 8.8 to 9 kg per inhabitant, placing Switzerland at the head of the chocolate-consuming countries before Belgium (7kg), Great Britain (6.2kg) and Sweden (5.9kg). The increased sales on the home market are all the more remarkable in view of the renewed rise in imports. Coming

mainly from countries enjoying price advantages on raw materials, these have risen in the last 10 years from 0.7 to 7.4 per cent of consumption. Swiss exports in 1970 totalled 15,019 tons—4.4 per cent up on the previous year. Swiss chocolate manufacturers have been able to extend their market by creating new lines adapted to current consumer tastes, and thanks to a dynamic sales policy.

According to OECD statistics Switzerland is Europe's biggest fruit consumer by far. In 1970 statistics Switzerland is Europe's biggest fruit consumer by far. In 1970 annual consumption of apples per head of the population was 32.9 kg, against 25kg in West Germany and 23kg in the Netherlands. Compared with these fig-

ures Swiss banana consumption might seem poor at 9.5kg per head, but it is nonetheless highest in Europe (Germany 8.7kg, Finland 4.6kg, Netherlands 6.2kg). In trade circles it is considered that Switzerland probably tops the league of all industrialised countries in the world for this particular discipline. During the first half of 1971 some 34,580 tons of bananas were imported, against 31,997 tons for the corresponding period of 1970, representing an increase of 8.1 per cent. Last year more than 95 per cent of these imports came from only five countries: Panama (40.4 per cent), Ecuador (23.3 per cent), Costa Rica (12.8 per cent), Honduras (12.3 per cent) and Guatemala (6.8 per cent).

(OSEC)

A STROLL IN THE NIEDERDORF

The Niederdorf area of Zurich ought to compete with Pigalle and Soho. It is not unduly chauvinistic to say that it offers the same variety and scope of entertainment, of less avowable pleasures, than the fun-grounds of other European capitals. The following are notes taken during a quick walk through the Niederdorf on a bustling Autumn evening. This cannot, unfortunately, be adopted as a tourist guide to Zurich's playground because the list of bars, taverns and night clubs is incomplete. In addition, the author declines any responsibility for eventual misrepresentations!

The walk starts at the eastern end of the Niederdorf, which is bounded by the Limmat and the Rämistrasse. Engage in Oberdorfstrasse and very soon you will hear the first signs of Zurich's bar-land with the juke-box blare proceeding from a modern and trendy bar, the *Otter Bar*. Ignore the *Oberdörfli* tavern and its *Würstlibar*, which are not particularly distinctive of the Niederdorf, and the next swinging place which the stroller will come across will be the *Olga Bar*. It too is neat, dark and modern, with boogie-woogie erupting from a chrome-plated and illuminated box.

Oberdorfstrasse then emerges on to Grossmünsterplatz. It is quieter there. The *Karl der Grosse*, an excellent *Frauenverin* restaurant, is naturally closed and so is the girls school adjacent to Grossmünster. Zwingliplatz, too, is deserted. But as soon as you engage into Munstergasse life and people begin to bustle again. The next significant restaurant is the *Bottega* Spanish *Weinhandlung*, excellent for its paellas and tortillas and always thronged with youthful people.

A quick jaunt down the Schoffelgasse, a dark and narrow alley leading to the Limmatquai, will lead the explorer to the *Alt Zuri*, the nearest genuine thing to a London East End pub, with a rollicking pianist and a big jug of beer on his instrument.

Ride up the Napfgasse for a quick peep in the *Turm*. With the *Odeon* at Bellevueplatz it is the gathering centre of the towns growing hippy and artist population. It is a splurge of yellow lights, vapours, brass and noise. Anyone with short hair feels out of place. Walk out of this untidy den and take a deep breath of fresh air before the next lap which brings you along the Spiegelgasse to the delightful Leuengasse. This is in fact a small square and certainly the quaintest in Zurich.

The back entrance of the *Oepflikammer* is at number 6. Having crossed a cosy restaurant with wooden panels, one climbs up a flight of stairs to reach the famed *Gottfried Kellerstuebli*, a warm wine cellar with wooden benches, yellowed walls and always brimming with life. A corridor and a flight of oak steps, passing the historical "pissoirs" leads one on to the Rindermarkt where the first establishment that one comes across is, lo and behold, an English pub. It is called the *Oliver Twist* and must be less than three years old. They serve real English Bass beer in authentic pint glasses. Apart from the red upholstery and wall-covering the place is a fair reproduction of a British pub and packed with people.

Rindermarkt Street connects with the Munstergasse and the Niederdorfstrasse at their junction and it is necessary to walk back a few hundred yards along the Munstergasse to make sure that no significant establishment has been left out. Flashy neon signs an-

nounce the *Spielesalon Carioca*, a penny-machine parlor which must make a fortune on *Gastarbeiter* sweat money. The walker then falls on the *Stussihof*, a cinema specialising in groovy films. A look at the hoardings shows that this has not changed. "*Verbotene Sexualität, Eine Frau wagt sich an die letzten Geheimnisse der Erotik*".

The next cinema that the walker comes across as he threads the Munstergasse backwards is the *Etoile*, a serious cinema with good French films in the old days, but which had obviously given in to the law of least action and showing "*Sex Party*". Erotisch, zugellos, dynamisch . . .

Various havens of enjoyment are clustered around this cinema. There is the *Stügfässli*, a rather hybrid but inviting beer hall with a sausage bar. The *Red House* cabaret guarded by a liveried man. The *Perroquet Rotisserie* on a first floor. The *Big Fat Daddy's* Jazz and Minstrel Show opposite and probably tailored to American tastes.

Moving down the street in the westward direction again, and beyond the Rindermarkt, the walker will see the *Golden Bar* to his left. It is an intimate place with a quiet pianist. Successive places of interest are the *Scampolo Bar*, offering Hungarian specialties, the proletarian *Rheinfelder Bierhaus*, the *Franziskaner Bar*, reputed for its snails, and to the opposite a new "*Art Coffee Shop*" with space-age furniture.

Then there is a small square with two similar concert inns of real, unshakeable Germanic character. They are the *Bierschipp Salmen* and the *Bierkneipe Trolianum*. Both are packed with unsophisticated people of all ages, drinking and singing to the twang of "Heimat" music. Escaping the din of this revelry, the explorer passes in front of a quiet restaurant, the *Biber*, excellent for its rice dishes. The neighbouring *Adler Fonduestube* is also commendable. At that level it is opposite to the *Wellenberg Cinema*, which, like the *Etoile*, is banking on sex and showing "Tropic of Cancer".

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